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**Facts About the United States Flag:**

The Flag of the United States of America, or the American Flag, is also called The Stars and Stripes, Old Glory, or The Star Spangled Banner. It is one of our most widely recognized symbols and it is displayed on public buildings, private residences, used as a motif on decals, clothing, badges, lapel pins.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1776, the Continental Army was organized under George Washington. Washington ordered the Grand Union Flag flown at his headquarters. It had thirteen alternate red and white stripes and the British Union Jack in the upper left hand quarter. In May of that year it is said Betsy Ross hand-sewed the first American Flag. Later Francis Hopkinson of New Jersey, who also is said to have designed the flag and a Declaration of Independence signer, sent a bill to Congress for his work with payment in the form of a quarter cask of public wine. This bill went unpaid, as he had been working for the Continental Congress at the time.

On June 14, 1777 the Continental Congress resolved that the flag of the United States be made of thirteen stripes alternating red then white and that the union be thirteen white stars in a field of blue. Since that time, there have been several acts dealing with the shape, design and arrangement of our flag and at one time there were as many as fifteen stripes.

It is commonly known that each new state leads to a new star. New stars are added on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July following a state's admission to the union. Each star must point upward, and per the executive order of August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1959 the stars are arranged in nine offset rows of six stars (five rows) alternating with rows of five stars (four rows). The stars are contained within a blue rectangle in the upper left of the canton. The thirteen stripes are seven red stripes alternating with six white ones. The colors are symbolic: Red for Hardiness and Valor; White for Purity and Innocence; Blue for Vigilance, Perseverance and Justice.

When Alaska and Hawaii were considered for statehood in 1959, more than 1500 designs, mostly 50 star versions were submitted. Michigan resident Robert Heft's high school project design received the most publicity. Mr. Heft originally received a "B-" on the assignment, but it was later changed to an "A" when the design was adopted as our 50 star flag.

Generally speaking, the thirteen stripes represent the original states of the Union. The width to length ratio is 1:1.9 and there are defined dimensions for the Union (blue background) and the star and stripe widths. When Michigan became the 26<sup>th</sup> state, the flag was changed to 4 rows of stars: 7,6,6,7 and that flag flew from July 4, 1837 to July 3, 1845. The United States Army Institute of Heraldry has plans for flags up to 56 stars. The 51 star flag, for instance, has 6 rows: 9,8,9,8,9,8

Our flag should never be lowered to any person, or thing, unless it is in response to a salute from a foreign nation. Flags that are tattered are destroyed, preferably by burning, often on Flag Day, June 14. Additionally, the American flag is always flown at half-staff at four locations in the United States: Post Cemetery on Mackinaw Island, Punchbowl Honolulu, Gettysburg National Cemetery and Arlington National Cemetery.